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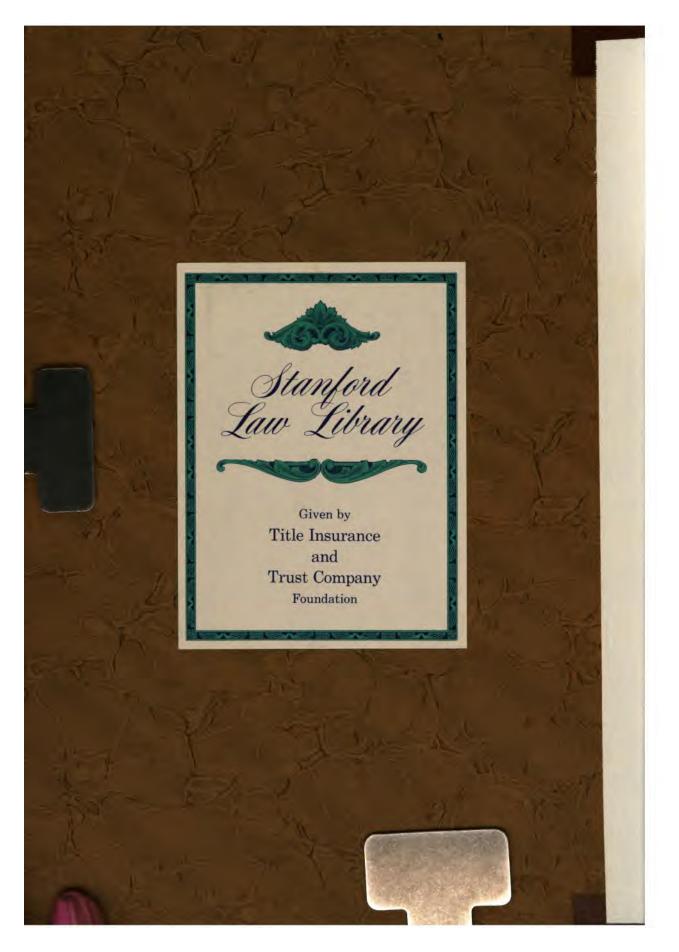
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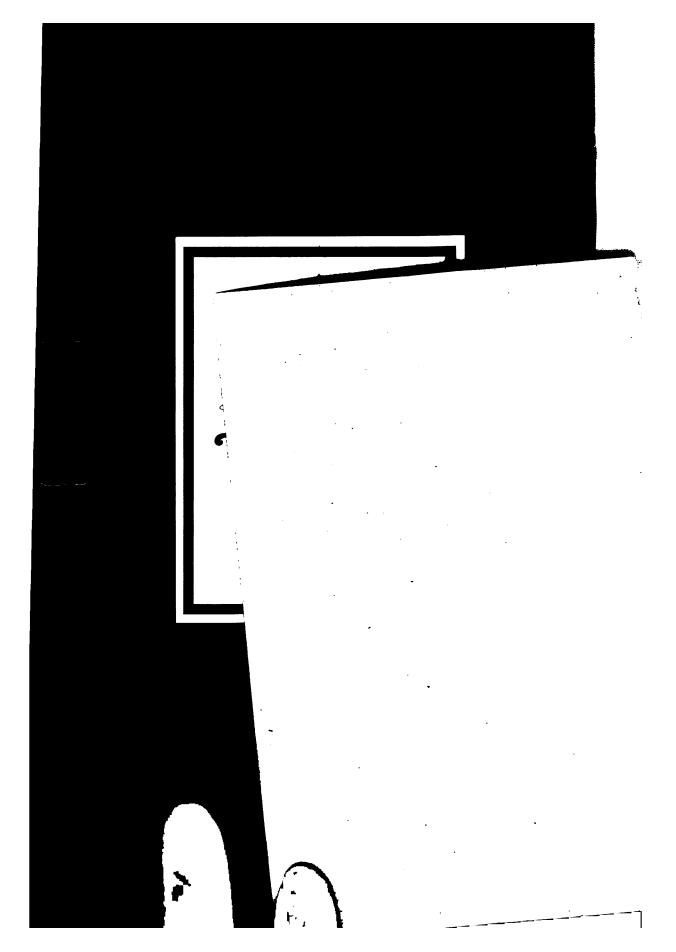
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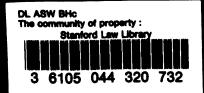
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THE

COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY:

NATIONALIZATION OF LAND.

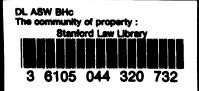
BY

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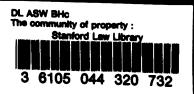


PREFATORY NOTE.

It is right shortly to explain the occasion and nature of the following essay. It fell to me, as Honorary President of the Glasgow University Independent Club, to give the toast of the evening at the dinner of the Club, on the 4th of March 1884: and certain members of committee had expressed a wish that I should combine with the toast a word or two on the Land Question. On the Thursday preceding the Tuesday of the dinner, I read, in the Edinburgh papers, a report of a speech by Mr Henry George on the preceding evening. The time that intervened did not allow much; but I prepared a few relative remarks, that divided themselves into two parts: the first part having to do with general principles, and the second more particularly with the mentioned deliverances of Mr George. thing that could be said, in such circumstances, and on such a subject, was necessarily summary.

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But it so happened that, in order not to intrude upon, or exclude, the other speakers, I saw it to be my duty wholly to withhold, in what I said, all that concerned the Land Question. That is what is now offered here; and not to interfere with the possible facility of a spoken discourse, it remains, but for a phrase or two, quite unaltered. It is to be hoped that a light touch on the general principles of a subject in the air at present will prove not unwelcome.





THE COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY: NATIONALIZATION OF LAND.

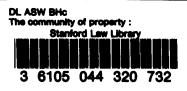
I THINK a few considerations may be not out of place at present, on that scheme of the hour which, in laudable aspiration for the extinction of all human want, would propose to realize at last the equality of mankind through that community of property that Plato fabled. It is a big subject, and I do not propose now to do more than break ground on it, with a few remarks as well on general principles as on what the newspapers make salient at present. In these, for example, I read three or four days ago the report of a speech by Mr Henry George.

Mr George is, for the most part, occupied there with the evils of poverty. And it is a fact that there is very great poverty on the part of large numbers of the population all over the world at present. This,

in truth, involves the burning question of the day; and one cannot take it ill of any man who comes forward with generous feelings to point it out to us, to call for a remedy, and even propose one. I am not so sure, however, of the efficacy of the remedy proposed, as I am of the existence of the appalling malady. In said speech, at all events, I find all that represents this remedy, or that calls for any remark of mine, to be contained in the few words that I shall now, just as they come, quote:—

"It is just as land becomes taken up that wages fall and poverty and pauperism arise. The man who owns the land of the country virtually owns the people of that country. He (Mr George) would give everybody equal rights of land. Proprietorship is not necessary to the best use of and improvement of land. What is necessary is a full security to the labourer or the investor that he should reap the natural rewards of his investment or his labour. In the United States there are at present millions of acres that would be cultivated but for the fact that they are held by dogs in the manger, who will neither cultivate the land themselves, nor allow any one else to cultivate it, unless they get a higher price. Vast tracts of land in this country (Scotland) that used to breed men, now breed sheep; miles of land, from which even the sheep have been driven, are occupied by deer. The reason for the nationalization of land is, that it is not the product of human labour. It is not just to nationalize capital, machinery, and the like."

I put these words together as containing all—absolutely all in the report—that demands one word



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of comment or counter-argumentation; and I mean that we shall see each of them again as my course of treating the general theme proceeds.

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That general theme is the community of property. There are no ambages with Mr George, so far, at least, as the land is concerned. He would have the state simply assume it, and without a farthing of compensation to the landlords. Taking the report of last Wednesday's lecture as given in the Edinburgh papers of the Thursday,—and I have fairly and literally quoted from them,-Mr George, it would appear, answers in the negative the direct question, "Was it also just to nationalize capital, machinery, and the like?" But surely this negative is a particularly blind, contradictory, inconsistent, and unreasoned one-surely we must see that no scheme that would nationalize land could escape in the end from going to the extreme and nationalizing all and sundry. It is quite evident, in fact, that the nationalization of the land would not only be unjust, but it would be incomplete and ineffectual; it would be a simple failure unless it were followed up by the thorough-going nationalization of everything whatever. Mr George, indeed, is almost unjust to himself in bringing himself to concede, to some mere individual prejudice, the exception of capital, etc. For he thus leaves room to the enemy

to make a show of urging against him, haste, crudity, and unreasonable partiality of logic.

Now, just to begin here, I shall refer to a few authorities on the general question. And, in this reference, Aristotle comes first, not only by right of years, but even still by right of importance. With but one exception, perhaps, in all these ages, Aristotle is by far the weightiest writer that ever wrote on *practical* philosophy. That at least. What he says on ethics is always home to the very centre of the subject, and the whole of the subject; it is always unambiguously clear, too, and surprisingly interesting—even modern. On politics, again, he is not less, but, probably, almost infinitely more, valuable. And for good reason. No man ever studied the subject as comprehensively as he. constitutions of no less than 158 states lay before him, and he had taken, to the full, stock of them all. All over the world his work on Politics is the text-book still; and what he says in it on the community of property lies, as the original and the material, under all that is said now.

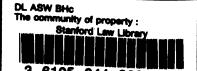
As regards the community of property specially, he has before him not only the scheme of Plato, but those of others also, as Phaleas, Hippodamus, etc. Aristotle's first argument is the fulcrum of

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the general position; and, in the point of view of a reason, remains the fulcrum of it still. activity is really vital only for what is exclusively his own. Where each individual is expected to do the same labour for a common result, there will be quarrels and dissensions, inasmuch as it is impossible to get all men to work equally. Community of property would not give unity; for what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and each would throw the burden upon each. Whereas reverse the case, give each what each can call exclusively his, and then each will very eagerly, so to speak, realize it, be it a property, or be it a wife, child, horse, dog, or anything else. It is pointed out, 2, That labour being so situated in respect of a property in common, it follows that there must be a deficient result. 3. Where each has his own, there is a possibility of many virtues which would disappear were property in common, as hospitality, generosity, liberality, and all those noblenesses in general that have their root in mutual obligation. And one may add that, should any one be tempted to object that, if the respective virtues disappeared, so also would the correspondent vices, and that even community of work would be an occasion of reciprocal service and assistance, he has only to reflect long enough to find the

position, whether in the one consideration or the other, really untenable. One may point out also that the affirmation and happiness of the one mode of life would constitute, as it were, the very soil of virtue; while the negation and moroseness of the other could lead only to inhumanity in general. And, indeed, there can be no doubt of that; a man has unspeakable pleasure when he can think that he has something of his very own-above all, when he can think that he has something of his very own making. It is mine, my own; I have made it myself! That, in fact, is simply humanity; that, truly, is what a man is sent for. 4. The essential differences between individual and individual are directly antagonistic to such identity of interests and action as lies in a community of property. A state is unity in difference, harmony, like music in the variance of notes: "not like to like, but like in difference. -distinct in individualities; then like each other even as those who love." 5. It has failed in practice; and it is absurd to attempt to realize what is not to be realized, what is not to be done, neither shall it be tried to be done. 6. It would be prejudicial to the secernment of certain abilities, dexterities, arts, talents, skills. For there are essential differences in men, and they must be differently



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applied. It is as though some were golden, others silver, and others, again, brass. And what does that amount to? Why, such differences constitute society, history, humanity—the end-aim of the universe, all that life is worth living for. 7. Happiness being impossible to the parts, it would be equally impossible to the whole. 8. Community of property would introduce the necessity of artificially regulating population. 9. It does not seem naturally to suggest provision against dangers from without. 10. It is always dangerous, confusing, and mischievous to change any law or custom that has, from length of time, become, as it were, a second nature to us.

We may justly assign all these arguments to Aristotle, who, I may add, can be seen, with profitable lesson to us, pointing, as it were, to the architect Hippodamus, with the extravagant ornamentation of his curled locks and his love of notoriety, as exemplifying the vanity, ostentation, and hollowness that may be apt to distinguish the mere projector of every age and country.

How much others since Aristotle are simply indebted to him, I shall now illustrate by a reference or two. Here, for example, we have this from Hume,—

"But historians, and even common sense, may inform us

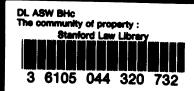
that, however specious these ideas of perfect equality may seem, they are really at the bottom impracticable; and, were they not so, would be extremely pernicious to human society. Render possessions ever so equal, men's different degrees of art, care, and industry will immediately break that equality. Or, if you check these virtues, you reduce society to the extremest indigence; and, instead of preventing want and beggary in a few, render it unavoidable to the whole community," etc., etc.

Paley formally chronicles the advantages of the institution of private property. It increases the produce of the earth, and preserves it to maturity. It prevents contests, and improves the conveniency of living—each man working, namely, at what is fittest for him, and so most happily for himself, and most productively for all. Paley is a man, very specially, of solid good sense, and I have but reduced what he says to its least.

I might quote to a like effect from many others; but among such I shall now refer only to three. And the first is Emerson, who, in his essay on *History*, has the following,—

"Property also holds of the soul, covers great spiritual facts, and instinctively we at first hold to it with swords, and laws, and wide and complex combinations. The obscure consciousness of this fact is the light of all our day, the claim of claims, the plea for education, for justice, for charity, the foundation of friendship and love, and of the heroism and grandeur which belongs to acts of self-reliance."

That, as one sees, is but the modern poetico-



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prophetic manner of colouring Aristotle's prose, or of setting it to music.

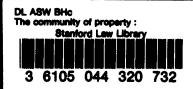
The next authority is Hegel; and him we may not be very far wrong in regarding as the only true masterwriter on politics since Aristotle. But to refer to Hegel at full here would be a long matter; for we have formal deliverances from him on the theme in at least three of his works, and others, more or less incidental, but of considerable extent in, I should say, most of those that remain. Naturally, then, I can only allow myself here a brief paraphrase of a few leading ideas, which themselves, I may explain, are no results of ordinary argumentation, ordinary progression by a series of reasons, raisonnement, but births, as it were, of a single evolution, here specially of free-will, of will that is the will of reason, of will that is the will of the universal; in possession of which man, unlike the lower animals, is not, or need not be, the slave of any particular whatever. To obey any one greed as a greed, or any one passion as a passion, is to obey a particular; while to obey the laws, all generalized usages, any one reason that leads up to the ultimate reason, the freedom of thinking, is to obey the universal.

Free-will exists in a subject; and the subject in which free-will exists is a person. The person is a person among persons:

he has rights as to them, and they have rights as to him. The person, so far, nevertheless, is but a bare subject; this bare subject must realize itself—in what? Only in its own opposite, a bare object—property. Property is thus the objective existence which a person gives his free-will. Property is but a vital flexion of reason itself. The object is but the one side; the subject the other; and both are but mutually complementary. Without the subject the object is void, null; as without the object the subject is unrealized. Apart, each is abstract; together, they are concrete. And the person must make himself concrete; he must give himself visible, tangible substantiality in property.

Property, private property, is thus but a branch of the necessary evolution of reason, free-will—a branch of the tree Ygdrasil, of the tree of the universe that has alone grown, and that alone grows.

All, now, being equally impersonations of reason, free-will, each respecting in his own self the rights of personality, equally respects those rights as vested in every other. Possession on the part of each of us is acknowledged as an act of freewill. The rationale that lies in property, however it may relate itself phenomenally to the satisfying of our wants, founds noumenally on free-will, on the necessary evolution of free-will, reason. This is the necessity of private property. And thus any community of property were really unreason. "It is the highest aim of the state," says Grotius, "to abolish the inadmissible common possession of the undistributed land." But how much each of us shall possess is not settled by the general principle. With the question of how much, we come at once into the sphere of particularity. Each person is a particular, and particular differs from particular, as in himself so in his property, endlessly. We are here in understanding, not reason.



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The state, now, reposes on the right of private property; and to withdraw that foundation would be the collapse of society. The state is the one universal life; it lives in us, and we in it; for both moments are essential. It is as essential that each of us, even in his individuality, should penetrate and pervade recognise and accept—the universality of the state, as it is essential that the state should penetrate and pervade the particularity of him. In illustration of this we see how it was that the Greek state perished. That the individual with his own ends, desires, and interests, should assert himself as apart from the state—this it lay not in the conditions of political Greece to endure. It was Christianity that gave freedom to the moment of the individual. And so it is that, in the modern state, the individual, even while he has no thought but his own self and his own advantage, is in reality working in the spirit of the whole, and for the whole.

These are but meagre hints from the original, but they must now suffice.

The last authority I mean to adduce is that of Arnold Ruge. There will be found in the Conversations-Lexicon a full page dedicated to the account of him; and I have myself written in criticism of a remarkable volume of his, Aus früherer Zeit, which he had kindly sent me. Than Ruge I do not think a more enthusiastic Hegelian ever existed or ever will exist. He began his celebrated Halle Year-Books as an ardent member of the Hegelian right, both theologically and politically; but, in both references, he gradually drifted over to the extremest left, and was simply exiled from state after state in consequence of

a somewhat saucy propagation of the most revolutionary enlightenment, till, finally, many years ago, he took refuge at Brighton, in England, where, in the enjoyment of a large correspondence, many friends, and a comfortable independence, honoured and respected, he still remains. Ruge is a very interesting man, of great talent, and, especially, of a very decided character. Much might be said on the theme, but it must suffice here, before quoting from him, to say that he utterly rejects theology, and has no object politically but what he calls the Republic. This is to be a Labour-State, with only a single House of Representatives and a President. The workman is to Ruge the only king, and he would wish to see the whole world a single confederacy of labour-states, each so dependent on the other that war would be an impossibility. We can see, then, that any opinion of Ruge's will be that of a thoroughgoing radical, if not of a thoroughgoing socialist. I think he must be called a great admirer of Hegel's political system, especially in its evolution—that, the evolution from free-will, he applauds with his whole heart. Yet he will neither follow Hegel into what Hegel emphatically insists upon as ultimate and essential, philosophical conservatism in politics, and philosophical orthodoxy in religion, but, as already said,

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determinedly remains outside in both respects. In other partial respects, again, he is a most severe critic of Hegel. Especially does he take him to task for his apparent state-proclivities as a Prussian Professor. And, indeed, it may be admitted that there is to be found here and there in Hegel a certain obeisance to the Prussian state; but nobody can look close without seeing that as much as this is incidental merely; or, almost, as it were, actually called for by the peculiarity of the position and the menacing aspect of the time. No one can look close, I say, without seeing that any such little tokens of concession are, while simply extraneous in themselves, again and again set aside by the evolution itself. Hegel is nowhere at his sincerest, at what he was most earnest in-Hegel is nowhere at his best, if not in his practical philosophy; and I assuredly nourish the conviction that no one will make himself at home with Hegel's various political assignments without acknowledging that he has had the advantage of becoming acquainted with a theory of the state, perhaps, at once the most comprehensive and the deepest yet, and without, at the same time, denying that he can find anything in it seriously to impeach the honour and honesty of its proposer. It is easy to find fault, but the fault found does not always lie. For example, in reference to

actual experience in the management of the poor, Hegel tells us once, "Against pauperism, as well as, in especial, against the abandonment of shame and the sense of honour, which are the subjective bases of society, and against the slothfulness and wastefulness, etc., which give rise to pauperism, it has proved itself in England (mainly in Scotland) as the directest means, to leave paupers to their fate and bid them openly beg." This, as one sees, is only a matter of report on the part of Hegel; but, as though it were actually his own doctrine and advice, Ruge speaks of it thus,-" Hegel says very rightly, society must take the place of the family as regards the poor; but then England again must serve as a warning example, and a man mistrusts his eyes when he reads, 'the best thing yet appears to be to advise paupers to beg." Now Ruge here, if he did not remember that his latter quotation was simply a report, ought to have opposed to it his first (the first clause above), which would have at least corrected it. But what, after all, has Ruge better to advise than Hegel (who does not advise the poor to beg, but enumerates direct taxation, emigration, public and private charity, all the ordi-"What is right," says nary expedients, in fact)? Ruge, "is the workhouse, and especially school institutions for the children of the poor, as they are



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to be found in England, though not to the needful extent." Then he animadverts quite as strongly on the vice of the poor as anybody else. "The horror of work propagates itself in and by families, to beg is their trade, and the children are put to it: they must by training be habituated, used to work. Through the evil habit of idling a man sinks from civilisation into barbarism." Surely Ruge's state of mind in all this is quite as severe as that of Hegel. Surely, also, he has less to offer by way of remedy.

But what I want to quote from this arch-socialist, this arch-radical, is the following on property:—

"It is labour entitles to a share in the general store. Capital is the product of labour. Nevertheless, an inequality of private means, as well as of the skills producing it, must take place. Labour is various in itself and variously produces. The general store, let it be even possessed and administered by the state or the community, must always become specialized again for private use. The demand for the state to take to itself the general store, would make the workman not free, but a slave, inasmuch as in these circumstances he would be absolutely precluded from placing his direct interest in his own work. The direct interest of the individual as regards his action of any kind, is his feeling of himself in it, and his spontaneous determining of himself to it. In this sphere it is interest that is necessarily dominant; even brotherhoods of associated labour must owe their origin to interest, and their main aim must be to secure the interest of all, and not infringe any. Only he who labours for himself is his own master; he who labours wholly for another is a slave. He who is mulcted of a part of the returns of his labour, and is obliged to submit himself to such imposition, is either cheated or robbed, according as it is owing to craft or to force."

This, it will be observed, is a very strong testimony; and, as on the part of such a man as Ruge, it is very peculiarly placed.* But, as against the sort of state proposed by Ruge, the even-handed justice of retort tempts me to note the objections of Hegel. We may suppose them to run somewhat thus,— Such a state would be a mere tug and struggle of parties, out of which no true humanity of existence could arise. In such circumstances government would be all but null. Such constitution, due to mere understanding, and not to reason—the mere mechanism of an equilibrium of simply such external powers mutually antagonistic—is altogether opposed to the idea of the state, which, properly, is an organic whole of reciprocally interdependent moments.

But on what pretences can it be possible in these days to demand that the land should be made a common property? It is not enough for that that we should perorate on the misery of our paupers. Any plan for that object must, of rational necessity, cohere with the idea of the state. How, in the first

^{*} All the quotations from Ruge are easily found in the volume referred to.—Aus früherer Zeit.

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instance, for example, are we to get rid of the present proprietors? There are proprietors of land by the right, say, of conquest, and there are others by the right of purchase. It is useless to say, just take the lands in either case, for we know that that would simply be robbery; that that would simply be injustice itself. Why, there would be so many absolute paupers in that case, that the same necessity would arise to rob the state in order to relieve them! It is impossible to call the possessors of land, by right of conquest that dates ever so many centuries back, thieves. By reason of mere prescription, they have as good a right to possess their lands as the others theirs by their deeds of purchase. The state could with no more justice denude a man of his lands than it could put its hands into my pocket and take my purse. The state, in fact, can get the land only by purchasing it, and it is certainly not an investment that would pay. The state can turn the public funds to better account than that.

But it is said, as we have seen, that "It is just as land becomes taken up that wages fall, and poverty and pauperism arise: the man who owns the land of the country virtually owns the people of that country." Now, a consideration of the nature of rent will afford us the due light here. Mr Buckle,

having to tell us that rent is no element of price, proceeds to chant, in his high way, that the discovery of this "is the corner-stone of political economy; but it is established by an argument so long and so refined that most minds are unable to pursue it without stumbling, and the majority of those who acquiesce in it are influenced by the great writers to whom they pay deference, and whose judgment they follow." I fear Mr Buckle only gives voice to his own misfortunes here; for he has no sooner signalized said corner-stone, than he incontinently forgets it. We find him in a moment turn his back on it, and declare rent to be " part of the wealth created by the To assume an aspect of deep reverence before the corner-stone, to read off for us the very placard on it, "Price is a compound of wages and profits; and rent is not an element of it, but a result of it;" and immediately thereafter to lift his chin in virtuous indignation at the tyranny of landlords, inasmuch as "rent is part of the wealth created by the labourers"—all this is wonderfully characteristic of Mr Buckle. He has no sooner authoritatively declared the wealth represented by rent to form no part whatever of the fund whence wage, the reward of the labourer, is drawn, than he allows himself to rise into the moral sublime over the wrongs of

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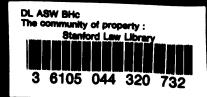
the labourer, who must have his very dues broken in upon by the usurpation of the landlord! Of course, we admit that rent is a result—were there no labour, there were certainly no rent; but this admission leaves the rest of the distinction untouched; and this, as well as the distinction itself, Mr Buckle has perfectly rightly named, though he immediately turns round, as we see, to make the latter nought.

Nor is it in any respect less strange that so very "comprehensive and exhaustive" a genius as Mr Buckle should have found the theory of rent so very difficult. For it is about the easiest thing at present in print. It is this. A goes before B to a new country,* and B before C. A takes the best land, B the second best, and C has left for him only what is inferior. and B, then, with the same labour, produce more than C-produce, compared with C, a surplus. It is quite evident, accordingly, that it will be the same result to C whether he continues to work his own land, or whether he agrees to work that of A or that of B, with sacrifice of the respective surplus—rent which, consequently, does not enter into price, or the exchangeable value of the produce. C sold his crops and paid his labourers quite as A and B did; but it was A and

^{*} New country for ease of illustration; but the theory of the Economists applies universally—as further in sequel.

B alone had a surplus—a surplus that remained after wages, etc., were paid. We may say, then, that rent is a result of labour (in connexion with population); but it enters not into labour, nor, consequently, into price at all. It is, in a certain way, a necessity—a fatality, if you will—of nature itself; and were it remitted to-day, it would be in full operation to-morrow. But it cannot be remitted. Remission of rent, so long as population compels cultivation of inferior soils, or rather, as it may also be put, so long as soils under cultivation —and there will be no soils under cultivation that do not yield a profit—so long as such soils, I say, vary in their advantages, natural or accidentalremission of rent in such circumstances is an impossibility, and its very supposition, for the relief of wages or whatever else, cannot for a moment be entertained. Such is the inexorable decree of the very facts.

Rent occurs when the population is such that even the cultivation of the inferior lands will yield a profit. This (least) profit is a necessity (for the cultivation would cease if it ceased); and, consequently, the price that yields it is, for the entire sphere of production, the determinative and ruling one. But that being so, competition will readily work the superior lands with sacrifice of the surplus returned by their superiority—namely, rent. Rent, though a consequence of pro-

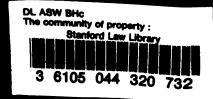


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duction (which is itself a consequence of population), is not an element of the price of production; and it is out of that price alone that the labourer can look for his wage. If I have twice the strength of another man, or twice the skill, and so double his production, I get twice the pay; and that is a natural advantage of which I cannot justly be deprived. In like manner, if my land have naturally a better soil, or if as regards markets it be better placed than another, by nearness, say, direct or indirect (mode of transit—railway, river, sea, good highroad, etc.), it is quite unavoidable that, in the event of my finding it desirable to let or sell, I should look for compensation for the advantage; which, evidently, at the same time, so to speak, is a mere windfall, over and above and nowise affecting what we may call the common element below-namely, the rates yielding profits to the least favoured soils. So then it is that rent arises, and we have thereby a class at leisure and above the necessities of ordinary And is it wrong, or a bad thing that we should have this class? If it is wrong, or a bad thing, then it is nature that is to be blamed for it, for it is nature that always, in the first instance, gives a class at leisure. But it is not wrong; it is no more wrong that my land should be twice as good as another land, than that I should be twice as strong as another man.

And neither is it a bad thing that we should have a class at leisure. To that leisure we owe, directly or indirectly, our lawgivers, our statesmen, our generals, our leaders of every sort, our men of science, our men of letters, our philosophers, poets, painters, and artists of all kinds—in fact, as is self-evident, it is to that leisure that we owe our possession of humanity as humanity. Aristotle himself tells us as much as this. He tells us in the first chapter of his Metaphysic that there was leisure for mankind only when there was a surplus, and that in Egypt, where that surplus first presented itself, precisely there also was it that there was a class first set aside for leisure. And what Egypt was as regards advance in the arts of life we learn every day more and more clearly.

Now, if this be the nature of rent, and it very certainly is the nature of rent, it is evidently quite beside the point to talk of rent as influencing wages. Of the money that is paid for rent of land, not one farthing comes out of the pocket of the labourer. Yet it is quite true that wages fall as land becomes taken up. Wages are certainly higher where there is no rent; but when there is no rent, or a low rent, there is but a small population as compared with the natural productiveness of the occupied lands. That is, there is much to be got, and few to get it. A man can be



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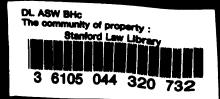
well off with a little labour; and more than that little he may not be willing to give, unless for a consideration that tempts him. In such circumstances we may say all are rich; so that wages, which depend wholly on the relative amounts of population and production. must be high. They are not high because of the absence or lowness of rent, however-which is a consideration only collateral. Mr George must be only unaware, then, of all that is concerned when he seeks to promote the discontent of the labourer by haranguing him on the injustice and iniquity of landlords, seeing that wages fall as land is taken up. There is not present in the circumstances any such relation of cause and effect as Mr George would fain make his hearers indignantly believe. In fact, it is just by the taking up of land that there are wages at all. Does Mr George, then, not want land to be taken up? Mr George is two thousand three hundred and seventy-six years older than Menenius Agrippa, and yet, while Agrippa convinced the Roman workman that it was absurd for the arms and the legs not to carry to the stomach, Mr George, on the contrary, would only convince the Anglo-Saxon workman that it is an iniquity for the stomach to carry sap to the limbs! "Wages fall as lands are taken up!" This "taking up" is a taking up (necessitated by increasing

population) of what, by necessity of the case, is successively less and less productive; and wages must fall.

But if it is an error to infer that it is a grievance not to let lands lie idle because wages fall, it is equally an error in Mr George to conclude further here that "the man who owns the land of a country virtually owns the people of that country." To predicate ownership in such circumstances is to predicate a distinction flagrantly unjust. If that is ownership, where is ownership to stop, and which of us is not owned? Between landlord and workman, in effect, there is precisely least of all ownership. The correlate to the landlord is simply nature, and not one farthing less is the wage of the labourer because of him.

But it may be said, there is an immense lot of money goes away as rent, and all that money has been raised by labour. There is no doubt of that. Well, it may be asked, Would not the workman be all the better if he had it? Nay, if it is the "result" of the workman, is it not the workman's right?

Now, it has been shown that it is not the workman's right. The workman can work only if he gets land to work on. Now, it is not unjust if he, being a better workman, gets proportionably more than his neighbour; and neither is it unjust that this land, being twice as good, should bring in twice as much as that.



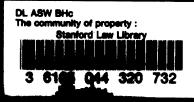
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Nor yet, again, is it unjust, in the last place, that you, leaving your inferior land, should agree to work my better land, where, while you still make at least as much as before for yourself, you can, nevertheless and for all that, allow me to pocket the bonus you pay for the privilege. That is the origin of rent, and that origin must be. Unless you laboured, indeed, there would be no rent; but still the rent does not represent your labour: it represents no more than the privilege of nature—a privilege that, do as you may, you will find it impossible to abrogate. It is as impossible to annul the natural inequality of the profit of soils, as it is impossible to annul the natural inequality of the strengths of men; and you may just as well talk of throwing all our strengths into a common fund as talk of throwing all the yields of the soils into a common fund. That, again, is the community of property, which is the single theme of our counterargumentation. All that we want to see at this moment is, that rent, as an inalienable privilege of nature, cannot be that of the workman also, is not his right. Still he would certainly be better off if he could have it. But can he have it?

The state could appropriate rent. That is a lot of money, and much could be done with it. With it, for example, the state might largely remit general taxa-

tion; or with it, it might appreciably better the condition of the workman. But the argument is, 1, That the state cannot take to itself rent; and 2, That even if it could take it, and could give it to the workman, the workman would not continue to be the better of it.

The state cannot possibly take the lands to itself without paying over to the holders of them an equal compensation in money. I have worked; and my skill, and my strength, and my abnegation have enabled me to lay up a certain surplus; with this surplus I have bought land, as I might have bought a ship with it, or machines with it, or bank shares If the state takes this land from me, it just as plainly robs me as if it took the ship from me, or the machines from me, or the shares, or, in fact, anything else from me that is mine, that I have bought -my hat, my coat, my shoes, my watch, if you will. If you take the land from the landlords, you commit as great a robbery as this—as great a robbery as if you took the capital and workshops of any Birmingham manufacturer. Mr George, as we have seen quoted, allows this latter appropriation to be unjust. Being asked, he admits that it would be "unjust to nationalize capital, machines, etc." I think it will not be too much to expect even a not too clever child to



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see the absurdity of this exemption. Perhaps here Mr George sees that capital, machines, etc., really represent labour, bodily and mental. Any injustice to them, then, would be an indirect injustice, quite as wrongful and iniquitous as any direct one to labour itself. That is cheerfully to be granted; we shall be very cordially in accord with Mr George in But if when I bought a ship, a that respect. machine, or bank shares, I was still supposed to retain the results of labour, why did I not similarly retain the same results when I bought land? The question speaks for itself at once. It is absurd and incorrect to refer property in land now to mere conquest; lands are as much accumulated labour as bank-stock is. The spoliation of the Tory landlord were quite as unjustifiable as the spoliation of the Radical manufacturer. What you despoil in either case is accumulated labour. Nay, if there is a difference, the difference is on the side of land, and the spoliation of capital is the more justifiable; for profits, unlike rent, may be said to come out of the wages of the "Price is a compound of wages and profit," says Mr Buckle, "and rent is not an element of In this Mr Buckle is perfectly correct; but the conclusion from it is quite the contrary of that of Mr George. Mr George would spare the capitalist,

but he would victimize the landlord. And yet the landlord does not take one farthing out of the fund that pays the labourer; while, for his part, the capitalist really diminishes it by that entire moiety which is termed profits of stock. Surely, then, it seems unreasonable and unnatural in Mr George to turn against the innocent, and spare the only party who can be called guilty, if it is the wages of the labourer that are to be taken into account! Give all to the labourer and leave the capitalist unpaid, surely that would give at once a tidy little bit of money to the labourer.

Of course this, as in the other case, would again be a rebellion of the limbs against the stomach; for, as the former would die if the latter did not feed them, so labour would die if capital did not feed it. There is no help for it, then, not only rent must be paid, but profits as well. In fact, if one were to calculate here how much the confiscation of property would effect for the labourer, he would be surprised at the mere pound or two by which, in the course of the year, his wages would be increased.

But there is another reason why, in aid of the labourer, as supposed or proposed, capital should be seized rather than land. The profits of money in trade are much higher than the profits of money in DL ASW BHC

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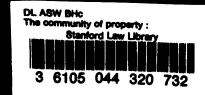
land. If I put money in land, I shall have to be contented with perhaps $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent; but I may reasonably look for four times as much if I use it as capital in trade. It is rather strange in these days, all the same, to talk of seizing either—either land or capital. Why, even when a nation conquers a country, it has long ceased to think it possible to do either the one thing or the other: it is contented with the usual public revenues. Look to Prussia when she took Saxony, or even Alsace, Lorraine, etc.

The state cannot possibly, as I have already said, seize the land without compensation, which compensation would amount to a mere transference of funds to the stock that yields at present the least in the It appears also that rent has no blame at all in our poverty and discontent. Lastly, I think it is quite certain that, in the hands of the state, land would yield less profit and give less satisfaction as regards stewards, farmers, and labourers than it does in the hands of the landlords. It is evident that time will not allow me to go into this at present; but just think of the enormous mass of middlemen that a state-occupation of the land would necessarily create, and of the consequent evils of struggle and corruption it would inevitably bring with it. These middlemen would be very disastrous substitutes for

our grieves, stewards, and farmers under our landlords. The Germans tell us pointedly of the immense gain that has attended the conversion of common property, so far as land is concerned, into private property. While Germany was a land in common, it was a land also only for the chase and for the wars of the tribes. Peace, comfort, prosperity, science, letters, arts came with the distribution of the lands among the individuals.

"Agriculture grew in time then to be the chief interest, and it is that now. Through the greatest part of the Middle Ages it was the most essential source of the general well-being-the foundation of public institutions and of private rights. In that mighty advance of the cultivation of the soil, we see the immense influence of private property. Where else, in fact, could it possibly show itself more powerfully operative than in labour applied to the soil, which has to wait always only for slow and gradual returns. In that is the call for the permanent possessor. He who only occupies the soil temporarily has no interest but to draw its utmost at once from it-no interest, in fact, but to exhaust the soil, and leave it useless for posterity. Whereas he who is certain to preserve his estate for himself and his offspring, or to turn to account what he has kept well and improved well, can with security venture to expend both his labour and his means upon the soil."

No valid reason whatever, then, it appears to me, can be brought forward for the seizure of land on the part of the state. That other proposition of Mr George, that "he would give everybody equal right



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to land," carries impracticability and absurdity on the face of it. How is it to be done? And, if it were done, how long would it continue? Again, as we have seen, Mr George says "proprietorship is not necessary to the best use of and improvement of land." I think we are entitled, from all that has passed before us, to meet this with a direct negative. That a thing should be my own, my very own, endears it to me, and I bestow on it a thousand cares that I would scarcely think of in the case of what belonged to another. So eminently human is it to work for one's self, that even those who are engaged working on a community of interests are found to conceal their gains.

Mr George says, too, "The reason for the nationalization of land is that it is not a product of human labour." He might just as well have said that a house is not the product of human labour: the land in itself is quite as worthless as the stones in the rock. It is the labour alone in either case that gives the value; and it is on the labour alone that there is any return, though, of course, the circumstances of quality and position greatly modify the necessary amount of labour; but so it is also with the stones of the house! Palestine was once a land flowing with milk and honey; it is now, for want of labour, largely

Babylonia, once the garden of the world, is now a melancholy desert. Where would be all these fine Rhine wines of Germany, if labour failed to keep up the terraces that grow the vines? Even the rich mud of Egypt, where the scattered seeds are only trampled in by the feet of the aberrant swinewhat would this rich mud do for Egypt if labour did not contrive to cover the surface of the land with it through canals and watercourses? As for the millions of acres in the United States that lie uncultivated, this is to be said, that land is simply a commodity like everything else, and must simply be held till its cultivation will yield a profit, and either set the proprietor to work, or induce him to let or sell. Let but a population come into the neighbourhood of these acres, and Mr George will see them pretty soon culti-When I buy hundred-pound shares at a vated. shilling, and lock them up till I can sell them at par, who in this world will blame me? When Mr George says further here, "What is necessary is a full security to the labourer or the investor that he should reap the natural rewards of his investment or his labour"when Mr George says that, I can only remark in reference to it, that he has come to reason at last, and that I heartily agree with him.

As for Scotland breeding deer instead of sheep,

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and sheep instead of men, it is just possible that mere money, for its own pleasure—it is just possible, I say, that the particular may have infringed on the But, that apart, this is to be said, universal here. If such and such a mountain can only grow deer; or if such and such another can only grow sheep; and if there is no labour possible for man on either but that of the gamekeeper or the shepherd, then, even in the name of common sense, let the deer, the sheep, the gamekeepers, and the shepherds be the only inhabitants. But if the one mountain or the other can support men, then, surely, it is not too much to say, let them support men-let them support men, and not only sheep or deer with their mere accessories, human or other. A man, of course, if only with capital enough, might buy up the whole of England; but it would not follow that he might convert it into a mere deer-forest. We are a state consisting of many millions of human beings, and, as a state, we should have something to say to the man who would evict us!

I am not here to stand up for the land laws. I am not lawyer enough to possess all the knowledge they impose. I am decidedly against primogeniture and entail. The land must, as a commodity, be free. Even as a commodity, nevertheless, it will bring with it its own duties. No commodity but has a

quality of its own, and that quality imposes its own I cannot store up my gunpowder consequences. next to the heated bricks of an engine-room. Ships have one quality, and lands quite a different one. This, too, is plain, that if it can be shown that sport -let it concern fox, or hare, or wood-cock, or whatever else—interferes in the slightest with the means of subsistence for the community, then sport must summarily, at once and for ever, be interdicted. It is quite possible that the landlords have sins to the community to answer for; but the community itself has redress within its own hands. Nay, at this very moment has it not sent a commission abroad to spy into the land? Let us await the result, in perfect security that the state itself, the community itself, can set what is wrong right.

There is now not one word of Mr George's, as in remedy of the evil, to which I have not spoken; and I leave the reader to judge of the result. Labour for a production in common would only lead to half-hearted workmen—if not to mere skulkers or hopeless malingerers—and half-heartedness, let alone skulking and malingering, can only lead to dissensions and dissatisfactions, to reprobation, to crimination and recrimination, and, in the end, to such insufficient products as would land us all in the pauperism Mr George would cure.

